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Reserve

Take a look
with us at
Our Use of Radio
in doing the
Extension Educational Job

We've tried to set down in a brief preview for discussion purposes such topics as:

Do farm people listen?

The power of radio as a fast method of communication.

Extension use of radio.

Our radio job in the Division of Extension Information, as we see it.

Some of the main efforts now under way to use radio nationally and to assist State and county extension workers to use it locally.

A brief look at significant future radio developments.

Some helps we in the division need from other members of the Federal staff.

DIVISION OF EXTENSION INFORMATION
EXTENSION SERVICE
WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Washington 25, D. C.

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Wings on Words

RADIO has now been with us for several decades. No longer does the farm family feel a sense of isolation. Together with the automobile, the telephone, and the RFD.....and even more than these.....the radio has brought farm people and city people together in a national community.

RADIO has helped farmers to save millions of dollars by flashing to them market and weather reports.....it has spurred farm people to think about improved practices and to cash in on that interest by consulting the county extension agent.....it has helped to banish the traditional loneliness of farm women.....it has brought more contentment to farm youth and helped to retard their exodus to the city. It has brought to all farm folk the opportunity to think in the enlarged terms of State, national, and international problems. It has brought into the farm home the personalities of the President and other members of the Government and their reasons for broad national policies, thus enabling farm people swiftly to register their points of view.

TRULY, radio has speeded up the entire functioning of human society.

THE Cooperative Extension Service adopted the radio as soon as it was available.....adopted it as a lengthened arm of rural education.....as a means of putting wings on its words of wisdom.

SO.....let's take a worker's-eye view at what we in Extension are doing now. What about radio?

WHAT ABOUT RADIO?

Yes, what about radio?

Does anybody listen?

Was that last program worth the planning I did for it?

Was it worth getting up early to get to the station?

Those are questions that all of us are asking. While we here in the Federal Extension Service do not get up for many early morning programs, hundreds of county extension agents do. Let's take a look-see together at those questions.

Is it effective.....?

You talk with about 50 farm people at a meeting....you, the county agent and, say, a State specialist....and you spend a lot of time and money getting there. You see those people--maybe you can get them to talk back. You cannot see your radio audience, though good programs do get a lot of talking back in letters, requests for bulletins, and other helps.

Right at the start, let's forget about radio competing with meetings and other educational outlets and think rather of where radio can best fit into a total educational program.

You know about the tremendous role radio is playing in keeping 130 million people in this country quickly informed about developments all over the world in this war. You recall the excitement such broadcasts as the Orson Welles Invasion From Mars program caused. You think a little and realize the tremendous power of radio in recent political campaigns.

Yet seldom do we connect those things with the question, who is listening to our program. Very few people have written in to say that radio was doing a swell job in keeping us informed about the war.

If the job was to sell you on radio we might start by looking at the 1940 census. More than 28 million families, 82 percent of our population, have radios; more than 60 percent of all farm families own radios. Experience and studies have shown us that the more isolated a family is the more likely it is to depend on its radio for much of the information and entertainment that it cannot satisfactorily get otherwise.

In a recent study made by the Division of Field Studies and Training in Ward County, N. Dak., 80 percent of the farm families interviewed had radios in working condition. The report indicated that every time the county agent went on the air in his regular program, about one-third of the farmers in the county were listening. Also the county agent was reaching many new farmers that he did not normally work with, since about one-third of his listeners had not been participating in extension activities.

The fact that many cooperative extension workers are making effective use of radio while others are not is something we need to study more.

You will find many such examples reported in the Extension Service Review. Let's look at just a few for background:

Back in 1943 there was a story about Ranger Mac, who had hit the trail for the last 10 years on WHA (Madison, Wis.) every Monday morning at 9:30. More than 40,000 school children had enrolled to listen. He had quit asking the youngsters to write him because of the problem of handling the mail, but one morning he did ask, "What is your favorite tree?" Result: 1,500 letters. Ranger Mac is Wakelin McNeel of the Wisconsin 4-H Club staff.

Or there is the story the Montana folks tell about former County Agent Daniel Thurber at Great Falls. He was holding a series of meetings with farm people. A heavy snowstorm upset the schedule, and he had to change the date of one of the meetings. There wasn't time to write and the telephone lines were down. He announced the change over his radio program and asked the farmers to tell their neighbors. Every farmer he expected at the meeting, except one, got the word and was there.

Or there is Ruth Crawford, home demonstration agent of Josephine County, Oreg., who has a microphone on her desk and talks regularly to home demonstration club members over the county.

Frances Opp, Lake County, Ind., does the same thing from the studio. She says fan mail tells her that many of the practices she recommends are adopted. Two home demonstration clubs changed their meeting time so they could listen to her as a group.

Then the School of the Air programs have brought results we can begin to measure.

New York gave 15 lessons in a radio sewing school last fall and had 1,250 women enrolled. More than one-third of them were not home demonstration club members. A questionnaire was filled out and sent in by 400 of the women, and 181 of these made a dress according to instructions. Many of the others reported things they had learned from the school.

And the Purdue Poultry School of the Air, which had nearly 4,000 students enrolled; or the Texas Garden School of the Air with over 6,000 enrolled.

We could think of many more examples. More important, our annual report of extension work for 1943 shows 1,420 county extension agents doing farm and home broadcasting. They report that they made 43,980 broadcasts in 1943. Add to that the regular State college programs that most extension services have and the regional and national network programs that are regularly helping us do educational work, and you get an impressive result.

So much for background. It is clear that radio is a major educational tool, also that some of our extension workers have learned a lot more about how to use it than most of us have.

What Is Our Job.....?

Our job in the Division of Extension Information, as we see it, is:

(1) To provide a steady flow of national educational material to the States for use in the State and county radio programs; new policies, regulations, food needs, as well as research results and national economic background.

(2) To assist the States in making the fullest, most practical, and most effective use of the new educational tool radio has given and is further amplifying for us; how to use radio, when to use it, radio training schools for county extension workers, extension radio handbooks, field visits.

(3) To make fullest use of national and regional radio outlets in cooperation with the Department's Radio Service and the Office of War Information; CBS Country Journal; Blue's Farm and Home Hour; spot announcements, such as labor recruitment, 4-H mobilization, Victory Gardens, on commercial network shows; the radio news services, such as UP, INS, PM; CBS Youth on Parade; and many others.

(4) To keep up with and help to keep extension workers informed of radio developments and their present and potential importance; television, frequency modulation, and facsimile broadcasting; the new wire recorders; the Department's policy on cooperation with commercial programs, and the like.

(5) Cooperate with the Division of Field Studies and Training in making radio studies and surveys and otherwise assist the States in appraising the value of radio through simple methods of checking program effectiveness.

In all our radio work, the relationship between our division and the Radio Service of the Department has been so close that either our division or the Radio Service could have made this report. We have no full-time extension radio specialist in the Division of Extension Information. We lean heavily on Wallace Kadderly, Al Bond, and others in the Department's Radio Service in our radio work. Likewise, we work closely with them in releasing Department radio material through State extension editors and extension agents.

Let's look at a few of these cooperative efforts:

Transcriptions:

Last October, soon after the Farm and Home Hour was virtually eliminated, we started a transcription service. The Radio Service took the job of preparing and financing the transcriptions. We took the job of distributing them through the State extension editors along with additional local material.

We now have a network of 375 stations scattered over the country using these transcriptions. We are sending close to two programs a week, and since the service started we have sent more than 8,000 transcribed copies of radio programs in that service.

The extension editors are making all the local arrangements. They have the right to cancel any program that does not apply to their State. More important, they and the agents are using the national material along with their local programs, following it with the local application. To speed up the service the transcriptions are sent direct from the processing plant to whichever person in the State the extension editor designates, and the extension editor gets advance copies of the script.

Farm Flashes:

The Department's Radio Service has for years had a Farm Flash service. During the last year about 600 current items were prepared in the Radio Service and were mailed out for local radio use. About 500 stations are using this material either as received or as it is localized by State extension editors and county extension agents. In 39 States the extension editors are handling complete distribution of these Flashes; in 13 States the editors send the Flashes to the stations or agents about as they receive them; in 26 States they localize the Federal material and put it into a similar State service that they have.

Homemaker Chats:

This is a 5-day-a-week program for homemakers similar to the Farm Flashes. It is used by about 450 stations and is handled by extension editors in much the same way as the Farm Flashes, though not to quite so large an extent.

Radio Training:

Before the war one of the most popular services we were giving the States was assistance in holding radio training schools for the agents and specialists who did regular broadcasting.

The travel situation and pressure of other work have caused us to give much less help with such schools the last couple of years. We do have definite plans for reviving this service. Al Bond of the Radio Service, traveling at our expense, plans to help with such training schools in three States in the near future. We in the Division of Extension Information hope to spend more time in the field during the coming year assisting States in building stronger information programs, including radio.

We have recently entered into an agreement with the Radio Service whereby Kenneth Gapen, located at San Francisco, will serve part time as an extension specialist in helping the Western State extension services with radio training schools and otherwise advising them on the best use of radio. We will pay his travel expenses on such work. He now has definite plans for schools in five States, and the extension directors and editors have expressed their appreciation of this arrangement.

Al Bond, of the Radio Service, is also cooperating with us and with the Radio Committee of the Association of Agricultural College Editors in revising our Extension Radio Handbook, which we plan to reprint and to make available as soon as possible to all extension workers using radio.

National Programs:

Some of the high lights last year include:

(1) About 75 national network broadcasts involving extension workers (11 State extension services cooperated in a series of production goals reports to the Nation on the Blue Network; 23 special broadcasts on CBS and Blue aimed at farm labor recruitment; 25 special 4-H broadcasts on Blue, NBC, and CBS; and other special broadcasts on Victory Gardens, nutrition, and other topics.).

(2) Cooperation with the OWI in arranging for and providing copy for about 75 farm labor recruitment spot announcements a week for each of 4 weeks on leading commercial programs scattered over all the networks. OWI estimates that these farm labor messages were planned and broadcast in such a way that the farm labor needs were heard an average of four times by every person in the country during the 4-week period.

(3) In like manner we cooperated in a series of spot announcements on Victory Gardens and 4-H Club work during 4-H Mobilization Week last March. About 30 of the leading commercial network programs carried 4-H announcements during the week. The OWI reports that a total of 82 million people listened to the programs which carried these 4-H messages.

(4) We also worked out special cooperation between the OWI and the extension editors for using local farm labor recruitment announcements in emergency areas. The arrangements also included other emergency war messages that we were anxious to have broadcast on local stations on the time that the stations had set aside for use of war messages provided by the OWI.

What's Ahead in Radio?

We have to look at radio in terms of the future.....television, facsimile, the new wire recorder, the new FM channels for exclusive noncommercial educational use.....the fact that close to 100 stations now have or shortly will have their own farm program directors.....these are all very much in the picture.

The Federal Communication Commission has just made a sweeping proposal for allocation of the higher frequencies in the radio spectrum, and will hold hearings on it February 14. After a similar hearing in 1921 allocations were made for the present standard broadcast band--550 to 1500 kilocycles. There are however usable wave lengths as high as 30,000,000 kilocycles, and the new proposal is aimed at dividing the higher wave lengths among FM, television, facsimile, and many other uses.

Probably most important to educators in this proposed allocation is the fact that it opens up enough clear channels for exclusive noncommercial educational use to allow for 500 to 600 new educational FM stations. FM (or frequency modulation) is a relatively recent discovery that makes available for voice and music broadcast a large amount of air space in the very high radio frequencies. FM broadcasts are virtually free of static and they have truer tone. Reception, however, is limited to the horizon, since the FM signals are not reflected back to earth like the standard broadcast signals. That means a large number of local and small regional stations, but since static is not a problem, the program can be

amplified at stations along the way and picked up and rebroadcast. Almost any kind of network is made possible without expensive networks of telephone lines. The Office of Education reports that about 28 States are seriously considering State-wide FM educational networks. This is surely a development we in the farm educational field must follow closely and be a part of. Whether we get a large number of FM educational stations or not, the development of FM is sure to bring more small local commercial stations, which can be used to advantage by many county extension workers who do not now have access to such stations.

Television holds even greater potential possibilities for education. When we get to the point where an agent can give a demonstration on a farm and thousands of other farmers can see it and hear it, the effect on our whole extension educational formula may be profound. That isn't dreaming. At recent FCC hearings it was clear that television is here and is due for rapid development after the war. The images now picked up in the home are supposed to be as good as ordinary 16-millimeter home movies. But television is expensive. It will be some time before any large number of farm people have sets and access to television broadcast.

Likewise, there's facsimile broadcasting, the end product of which is something like a photostatic copy picked up by home radio sets. That is already quite practicable, but, again, it's a question of getting enough receiving sets over the country and other mechanical advances that will take time.

Neither television nor facsimile broadcasting is expected to mean nearly as much to us as the new FM development, for several years at least.

The new wire recorders are important to us because they make it much easier for county agents and farm radio program directors to record on-the-scene broadcasts at the farm, at meetings, and the like, and broadcast them later. The voice and natural sound effects are picked up on a very fine steel wire by a process of magnetizing the wire. The equipment is light and relatively easy to handle. The wire can be demagnetized by reversing the machine, and used over and over. The military services are making extensive use of the recorders, and it will probably be difficult to buy one until after the war.

The recent development of local station farm programs with a farm director employed by the stations is of interest to us for several reasons. Five years ago there were very few such farm program directors. Today about 100 stations have farm program directors, and the development is gaining momentum. Wallace Kadderly was recently at Portland, Oreg., where each of five local stations is planning to employ a farm program director and start a farm service program. This development means that we will have additional good outlets for broadcasting educational material to farm people. It also shows that the local stations are realizing the need for and possibilities of farm service programs.

All these developments portend greater possibilities of using the radio in our regular educational work. Our challenge in the Federal Extension Service is to keep up with them; to weigh the different developments properly; and somehow lead the way in the fullest practical extension use of the relatively new, fast-developing, and potent educational tool modern radio has given us.

Do We Need Your Help.....?

Indeed we do.

The last thing we would want is for anyone here in the Federal Extension office to think of radio as the sole "baby" of the Division of Extension Information. Rather, it is a means of helping the specialists to do their special job, a tool that supervisors must help extension agents use. We need from every Federal extension worker:

(1) Constant suggestions of topics and themes we should stress in our radio efforts. Nothing would suit us better than to get such a list now from every worker for use by our office and the Department Radio Service here and, possibly, for passing on to the States.

(2) We need help from specialists and supervisors who travel in keeping up with specific problems and successes which State and county extension workers are having with radio.

(3) We need help, especially from the administrative and supervisory groups, in our efforts to lead the States to develop stronger programs for using radio as a regular extension tool and in our efforts to train local extension workers in how to use radio effectively. The first requisite of a strong radio plan of work in any State is close administrative and working relationships between the editor handling radio and the entire staff -- director, supervisors, and specialists -- all to the common end of using radio to help extension agents do the total extension educational and promotional job -- not a radio plan that is of, by, and too often considered for, the extension editor.

(4) Even if we had the specialized radio help we need, we would still look to the staff here for much help and guidance in planning radio topics, writing technically correct subject matter, and in our field radio relations with the States. The fact that we are very short-handed for the broad, fast-developing field of radio makes that help all the more essential.

